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# THE PRONUNCIATION OF MEDIAEVAL RUSSIAN

W. K. MATTHEWS

## I

WE may appropriately begin our study of the phonological system of mediaeval Russian or, more properly, of Old East Slavonic by delimiting the scope of our inquiry. The language acquired its alphabet from a South Slavonic source towards the end of the 10th century, and its earliest surviving literature in the widest application of the term consists of transcripts of Old Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) MSS. (e.g. *The Ostromir Gospels*, 1056–7), made at various monastic centres in both North and South Russia. The originals of these copies were themselves versions of preponderantly religious matter in Hellenistic and Byzantine Greek. They came to be regarded as models by practitioners of Russian literature in the course of several centuries and inevitably influenced the written use of the language even in the secular sphere. Here the purpose of the scribes was to draft mainly legal documents, for instance treaties and deeds of gift, which ascend to the 12th century, and of the carvers of inscriptions to carve words on objects of value, such as goblets and crosses of precious metal, whose known beginnings belong to the same period. For the language of the 11th century we have no native records other than the errors made by Russian scribes in copying their Old Church Slavonic originals, and for that and for a reflection of 10th-century and even earlier forms of Russian we must rely on the names of foreign origin, both personal and local, which occur transcribed into Russian in the Primary Chronicle.<sup>1</sup> These, however, are less valuable as evidence, because the oldest extant copy of the Chronicle, the so-called Laurentian MS., is dated 1377, which lies outside the limits of the first more or less complete period of Russian history. But besides native sources we have the testimony of foreigners, like the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who wrote his *De administrando imperio* and *De thematibus* (Περὶ θεμάτων) in the 10th century,<sup>2</sup> and the Arab and Persian travellers and geographers, whose earliest records go back

<sup>1</sup> See A. A. Šachmatov, *Povesi' vremennykh let*, I (Petrograd, 1916).

<sup>2</sup> See J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Patrologiae graecae tom. CXIII* (Paris, 1864), also B. G. Niebuhr, *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*, III (Bonn, 1840).

to the 9th.<sup>3</sup> Similar reflections of a later stage of mediaeval Russian may be caught in the distorting mirror of foreign transcriptions: the 12th century *Chronicon Livoniae* of Henricus Lettus,<sup>4</sup> for instance, contains a number of North Russian proper names, which have the advantage of bearing date, even though the spelling is late and stereotyped. In contrast to them the evidence of Russian loan-words in the modern languages on the marches of the East Slavonic area, notably West Finnic and Baltic, is vitiated by disparity of time, whose flux may be conceived *a priori* to have involved phonetic changes in the two language-groups. The loan-words may, and probably do, point to an earlier pronunciation of Russian than the one which is now current, but the languages that absorbed them could hardly have remained stationary while Russian was evolving. Thus we cannot say that, for instance, Latvian *grēks* "sin" (< O.R. рѣхъ), whose *ē* is sounded [æ:] to-day, was pronounced in this way at the time of borrowing.

The approach to mediaeval Russian pronunciation may be made not only through its reflection in the loan-words of the modern languages alluded to, but from the standpoint of modern Literary Russian and its associated regional dialects, as well as from that of modern Ukrainian and White Russian. We may start with the phonetic realities of the present and read these back, with suitable modifications, into the language of a thousand years ago. These phonetic realities, however, are not of uniform value for our purpose. Only the phonetic systems of Russian and Ukrainian have so far been satisfactorily determined. The specifically Russian dialects as well as the Ukrainian dialects and White Russian have still to be studied phonetically in detail before their materials can be satisfactorily used for the determination of the phonology of Old East Slavonic. This comprehensive term is preferred by Ukrainian scholars, for instance, to "Old Russian" and indeed appears to be a more appropriate designation of certain phonetic features of the Slavonic literary dialect used over considerable parts of the forest and steppe area of Eastern Europe in the early centuries of the second millennium. Nevertheless we shall retain the traditional term "Old Russian" as less cumbersome and more familiar, and we shall limit its application here to the East Slavonic current between, say, 900 and 1199. The choice of dates is determined by the

<sup>3</sup> A. Ja. Harkavi, *Skazanija musul'manskich pisatelej o slavjanach i russkich* (St. Petersburg, 1870).

<sup>4</sup> See W. Arndt, "Heinrici Chronicon Lyvoniae," *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, XXIII, 1874, also S. A. Anninskij, *Chronika Livonii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1938).

available body of material and is not therefore altogether arbitrary. But it will be obvious that, in view of the chequered nature of the evidence at our disposal for the phonetic identification of mediaeval Russian, our picture of its phonological system must necessarily be incomplete. By restricting our field of vision, however, to what is in effect the century and a half between 1056 and 1199 we shall gain in clarity, even if we have to sacrifice a modicum of likelihood. And yet we must on no account lose sight of the conjectural nature of our study. Historical phonetics, lacking valid evidence, can at best be constructed on probability and at worst on fancy. We must consistently exclude the latter and make our hypotheses as transparent and as plausible as our material allows.

The standpoints which we can adopt in pursuing our investigation are as various as the material which presents and defines them, but they may be reduced broadly to two methods—the serial and the synchronic. The first involves the adoption of one standpoint at a time in historical sequence; the second ignores the temporal gaps and aims at an immediate maximum of evidence. We propose to adopt the first method, which is more aware of the time factor, and to supplement the findings made from one standpoint in the historical series by those of another, if they contribute to probability without forcing conjecture. The cogency of the evidence in any case resides not in detached, but in cumulative proof.

## II

Let us consider first of all the material furnished by 10th-century Byzantine and Arab sources, which are approximately contemporary. Here we shall be mainly concerned with the testimony of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and as his transcriptions of East Slavonic names are in Greek, we must know something about the pronunciation of that language a thousand years ago. It should be obvious that in assessing the phonetic values of the Byzantine transcriptions we are interpreting a body of unfamiliar facts in terms of facts which are familiar to some extent. But our knowledge of Byzantine Greek phonology is essentially a matter of conjecture even if, admittedly, the conjecture is sometimes plausible. Byzantine Greek, according to G. N. Hatzidakis<sup>5</sup> and those who have followed him,<sup>6</sup> was very like

<sup>5</sup> Μεσαιωνικά καὶ νεὰ Ἑλληνικά, I (Athens, 1905), also *Einleitung in die neugriechische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1892).

<sup>6</sup> B. F. C. Atkinson, *The Greek Language* (London, 1933); E. H. Sturtevant, *The Pronunciation of Greek and Latin*<sup>2</sup> (Philadelphia, 1940); R. M. Dawkins, "The Greek Language in the Byzantine Period" (in Baynes and Moss, *Byzantium*, Oxford, 1948, pp. 252–269).

modern Greek in spoken usage, as the latter was formed long before the 10th century.<sup>7</sup> We may either agree with this standpoint or contest it with J. Psycharis,<sup>8</sup> who alleged that the κοινή gradually became modern Greek in the course of seven centuries (from the 10th to the 17th), and that the strictly modern period of the language begins in the 17th century. Whichever view we may adopt, it is clear from historical evidence that the literary use of Byzantine Greek, except in the popular chronicles of Malalas (6th century), Theophanes (8th century), and Constantine Porphyrogenitus (10th century), followed Classical practice with an enthusiastic and obstinate servility and presents what may be described as a Classical κοινή. This purism, by creating a breach between the written and the spoken word, naturally tends to mask the phonetic values of the language, which *a priori* must have undergone notable changes in the course of over two thousand years. How far it had changed by the 10th century may be inferred from a contemporary epigram, which reads :—

οὐ βαρβάρων γῆν, ἀλλ' ἰδὼν τὴν Ἑλλάδα,  
ἐβαρβαρώθης καὶ λόγου καὶ τὸν τρόπον.

(" You became a barbarian in speech and habit not in a barbarian country, but in Hellas.")

Hatzidakis's conviction that the phonology of Byzantine Greek may best be explained through the modern phonetic system is supported by the evidence of Old Bulgarian and Old Russian. Let us therefore accept his phonetic interpretation of the language at least as a working hypothesis. H. Pernot,<sup>9</sup> elaborating on Hatzidakis, conceives the history of modern Greek as covering the period from the 4th century of our era to the present and divides this space of time into a Byzantine (4th–15th century) and a specifically modern segment (15th century onwards). It would seem that in Byzantine times, as defined here, and certainly by the 10th century, which is the period we are particularly interested in, the following vowel-letter correlations symbolised variant spellings of the same sound, viz. αι/ε, οι/υ, ει/ι, ω/ο stood for [e], [i], and [o] respectively. The length of vowels had by that time ceased to be distinguished, and, for instance, ου, pronounced [o:] in the 6th century, had become [o] in the 10th, while the diphthongs were already monophthongised,

<sup>7</sup> Hatzidakis (*op. cit.*, p. 172) quotes H. Steinthal to the following effect : " Dieses Neugriechische hat sich gegen Ende der alten Geschichte oder zum Anfang des Mittelalters gebildet und seitdem wenige Veränderungen erlitten " (*Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern*, Berlin, 1863, p. 414).

<sup>8</sup> *Essais de grammaire historique neogrecque*, I (Paris, 1886).

<sup>9</sup> *D'Homère à nos jours. Histoire, écriture, prononciation du grec* (Paris, 1921).

viz.  $\alpha\upsilon$  was [av],  $\epsilon\upsilon$  [ev],  $\eta\upsilon$  [iv] and  $\upsilon\iota$ , [i]. This gives a Byzantine vowel-triangle identical with that of the modern literary language,<sup>10</sup> viz.

close series	<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>
medium series	<i>e</i>	<i>o</i>
open series	<i>a</i>	

and very different from the twelve-phoneme Classical (5th century B.C.) pattern :<sup>11</sup>

$\iota/\bar{\iota}$	$\upsilon/\bar{\upsilon}$	
$\epsilon/\bar{\epsilon}$		$\omicron/\bar{\omicron}$
$\eta$		$\omega$
$\alpha/\bar{\alpha}$		

The existence of a central vowel (shva), at least in dialects, may be postulated from the substitution of  $\epsilon$  for  $\alpha$ ,  $\iota$ , and  $\upsilon$  in unstressed positions, e.g. τέσσερα for τέσσαρα, κρεβάτι for κράββατος, θεωφιλία for θεοφιλία, and γεναίκα for γυναικά, and possibly from the syncope of weak vowels, e.g. νά for a metatonic form of ἵνα, μολογῶ for ὁμολογῶ, and περπατῶ for περιπατῶ.<sup>12</sup>

The consonant-letters may be assumed to have had the modern sound, viz.  $\beta$  was [v],  $\delta$  was [ð], except after  $\nu$ ,  $\gamma$  was [ɣ], except before another  $\gamma$ , where it represented the velar nasal [ŋ],  $\zeta$  was [z],  $\sigma$  was voiced between vowels, and  $\theta$ ,  $\phi$ , and  $\chi$  were sounded [θ], [f], and [x] respectively. The Byzantine consonantal system then must have appeared as follows :—

plosives	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>k</i>	
nasals	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	$\eta$ (agma)	
fricatives	<i>f/v</i>	$\theta/\bar{\theta}$	<i>s/z</i>	<i>j</i>
lateral			<i>l</i>	<i>x/ɣ</i>
vibrant			<i>r</i>	

This, like the Byzantine vowel-pattern, presents notable divergences from the Classical system of phonemes, which was characterised by its correlated plosive series  $\pi/\beta$ ,  $\tau/\delta$ ,  $\kappa/\gamma$ , aspirated plosives  $\phi$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\chi$ , rough breathing (*h*), voiceless  $\rho$ , solitary affricate  $\zeta$  (*dz*), and semi-vocalic digamma (*w*). Some of the phonetic values of the Greek characters in the 10th century, so different from those of Classical usage, are suggested by Constantine Porphyrogenitus's transcription

<sup>10</sup> J. T. Pring, *A Grammar of Modern Greek on a Phonetic Basis* (London, 1950).

<sup>11</sup> See E. A. Juret, *Phonétique grecque* (Paris, 1938).

<sup>12</sup> See K. Dietrich, "Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der griechischen Sprache von der hellenistischen Zeit bis zum 10. Jahr n. Chr." (*Byzantinisches Archiv*, I, Leipzig, 1898).

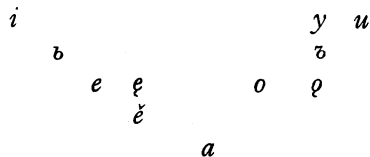
of *conseruet Deus imperium vestrum* as κονσέρβει Δέους ἡμηέριουμ βέστρουμ.<sup>13</sup>

The stress system of Byzantine Greek, too, had come to differ considerably from that of the Classical language: where this had distinguished two fundamental tones—the rising acute and the falling circumflex—Byzantine Greek stress, described by its grammarians as σφοδρός (“vehement”), must have been purely dynamic, or “expiratory”, for already in the 4th century Gregory of Nazianzus could compose his hymns in accentual metres.

### III

The φοινικία γράμματα, expanded into the Ionic alphabet by the addition of new characters, including η and ω, had evolved a cursive style by the 9th century, and this and the original uncial symbols served as models to the Greek designers of the two Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavonic) alphabets. By the 9th century, when the cursive-inspired Glagolitic and the uncial-inspired Cyrillic came into existence,<sup>14</sup> a great many Greek characters had become redundant with the levelling of the vowel system and the consonantal shifts we have already observed, and this redundancy was unintelligently repeated in both the Slavonic alphabets. The values of all the Old Bulgarian characters, except those modelled on non-Greek originals, viz. the *jusy* (nasals) and *jery* (semivowels), *jat'*, ж, the Hebrew-looking ш, the affricate symbols ч and ц, and the composite ѡ and Ѣ, may be taken to reflect part of the phonology of contemporary Byzantine Greek. This, of course, is not a statement of fact, but merely a presumption whose validity is supported by the evidence of tradition as embodied in the present-day pronunciation of the South and the East Slavonic languages.

The Old Bulgarian phonetic system<sup>15</sup> exhibits the following paradigms in the International Czech-style transliteration,<sup>16</sup> viz. the triangle of vowel phonemes



<sup>13</sup> H. Pernot, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> See my article “Sources of Old Church Slavonic” (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXVIII, 71, London, 1950).

<sup>15</sup> See my article “The Old Bulgarian Language-Type” (*Archivum Linguisticum*, I, 2, Glasgow, 1949).

<sup>16</sup> Described and illustrated in my forthcoming pamphlet *The Latinisation of Cyrillic Characters*.



and the following consonant-grouping, where the phonemes in parentheses represent markedly palatalised sounds :—

occlusive group	{	$p/b$	$t/d$	$k/g$		
		$m$	$n$	$(n')$		
constrictive group	{	$f/v$	$s/z$	$\xi/\zeta$	$j$	$ch (= x)$
			$c/dz$	$\epsilon/d\zeta$		
			$l$		$(l')$	
			$r$		$(r')$	

The Cyrillic alphabet which symbolises this system, was adapted to Russian use with presumably similar values nearly a thousand years ago. Its modern development (*graždanka*) still retains some of those values, except that the new dualism of “ hard ” and “ soft ” vowels partly obscures the original alphabetic scheme with syllabic spelling-devices : thus ня as distinct from на and ню as distinct from ны represent differences in the quality of the consonants. The modern Literary values of the Russian alphabet may naturally be used to interpret the phonological structure of the mediaeval language, and indeed this “ line of least resistance ” is generally followed in reading the mediaeval texts. But the historical evidence at our disposal as well as the testimony of modern Ukrainian prompt a rather different interpretation. By referring again to the data furnished by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who in *De administrando imperio* (cap. ix) records a great many “ Russian ” proper names, both Scandinavian and Slavonic, we shall be able to piece together a more or less complete phonetic picture of 10th-century Russian in terms of contemporary Byzantine Greek, though its acceptance is rendered somewhat difficult by our knowledge of the distorting effect of Classical tradition (e.g. in the use of  $\beta$ ,  $\delta$ , and  $\gamma$ ). The Slavonic names and words on which that picture is based are :

Ρωσία (found also in much earlier writers), Νεμογαρδᾶς (Новъгородъ), Σφενδοσθλάβος (Святославъ), Ἰγγωρ (Игорь, Ингваръ), Μιλίνισκαν (Смольньскъ), Τελιούτζαν (Любъчь), Τζερνιγώγαν (Чърниговъ), Βουσεγρᾶδέ (Вышеградъ) Βιτετζέβη, (Вытичевъ), Κιάβον, Κιόβα or Κιοάβα (Киевъ), Κριβηταινοί, Κριβιτζών (Кривичи), Βερβιάνων (Древляне), Λενζανῆνοι (Лучане), Δρουγούβιτων (Дръгъвичи), Βελοχρωβάτοι (Бѣлохръвати), πολύδια (полюдьє), and the names of six rapids (φραγμοί) of the Dnieper, viz. Ἑσσοῦπῃ (не съпи), Ὀστροβουνίπραχ (островныи прагъ), Νεασήτ (неясъть), Βουλνιπράχ (вълньныи прагъ), Βεροῦτζι



(въручи), and Ναπρεζή (на бързѣ ?). Discounting redundancies and errors in spelling, this gives us the following vowel-system:—

<i>i</i> (ι, η, οι)	<i>y</i> (η) <i>u</i> (ου)
<i>ɔ</i> (ι, ε)	<i>ɔ</i> (ου)
<i>e</i> (ε, αι)	<i>o</i> (ο, ω, ου)
<i>a</i>	

and the following system of consonants:—

<i>p/b</i> (β)	<i>t/d</i> (δ)	<i>k/g</i> (γ)	
<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>		
<i>v</i> (β)	<i>s/z</i> (ζ)	<i>ʃ</i> (σ)	<i>j</i> (ι)
		<i>č</i> (τζ)	<i>x/ǵ</i> (γ)
	<i>l</i>		
	<i>r</i>		

Collation of the Greek transcriptions and their conjectured Russian and sometimes Bulgarian equivalents enables us to expand these systems so as to give them a more or less Slavonic aspect. *A posteriori* we may assume that Constantine used ι and η for *i* (e.g. Μιλίνσκαν) and γ (e.g. Νεασήτ), ι for *ɔ* (ǝ) and *j* (e.g. Τελιούτζαν), ε for *e* and *ɔ* (e.g. Βεροϋτζη), ο and ω (rarely ου) for *o*, and ου for both *u* and *ɔ* (ǝ) (e.g. Έσσουπη). Forms like Σφενδοσθλάβος postulate the presence of nasal vowels, found in Old Bulgarian as *ɛ̃* and *õ*, but these probably represent a South Slavonic rather than an East Slavonic pronunciation, for we have already remarked the substitution of Bulgarian for Russian forms in Βουλνηπράχ and Όστροβουνίπραχ. Of Constantine's consonant-symbols, β stands for *b* as well as *v* (e.g. Βελοχρωβάτοι), *j* may represent *γ* (e.g. Νεμογαρδός) as well as *γ*, and σ both *s* and *ʃ* (e.g. Βουσεγρადέ).

Arab records of the 10th century are less useful than Constantine's: they have the disadvantage of not distinguishing vowels with sufficient accuracy, and, besides, the number of transliterated names is much more limited. But they certainly help us to define certain sounds, and curiously enough one of them is the elusive vowel *ǝ̃*. Al- Mas'ūdī's "Dulābe" (دولابه) <sup>17</sup> suggests an open pronunciation, but the existence of the form "Kujābe" (كويابه, cf. Constantine's Κιοάβα) partly discounts the value of this evidence. The presence

<sup>17</sup> A. Ja. Harkavi, *op. cit.* J. Lelewel (*Géographie du moyen âge*, I-V, Brussels, 1854-1857), equates "Dulābe" with O.R. Дулѣбѣ. See also A. C. M. D'Ohsson, *Des peuples du Caucase et des pays au nord de la Mer Noire et de la Mer Caspienne dans le dixième siècle* (Paris, 1929).

of nasal vowels is attested by such forms as Al-Mas'udī's "Wändžslāwe" (واذج صلاوه, O.R. Вячеславъ), but Ibn Khordādbēh has *qināz* (O.R. князь) as early as the second half of the 9th century, and this seems to point to a lapse of ǣ. There is more agreement on the name of the Varangians—"Rūs" (روس), which occurs in the works of many Mohammedan authors from, say, Ibn Khordādbēh to Al-Ya'qūbī (9th century) and indicates a close pronunciation of ω in Byzantine Greek Ῥῶς (cf. Prudentius's "Rhos"). The form Ῥούσιοι (cf. Liutprand the Lombard's "Rusii") is not earlier than the 10th century.<sup>18</sup>

#### IV

In contrast to the relatively meagre testimony of Byzantine Greek, as seen in the phonological schemes of Old Russian sounds based on Constantine's transcriptions, we have the necessarily fuller account of Old Russian in the numerous errors of the Russian copyists who sought to reproduce the Old Bulgarian writings which had come to Kiev and had spread from there to other Russian ecclesiastical centres in the course of the 11th century. The fact that the copying of MSS. was practised at more than one centre and the added fact that the centres were normally far apart would make the intrusion of regional dialects inevitable where the copyist, for one reason or another, allowed his attention to stray from the columns of his original. Even the earliest dated Old Russian codex (the Ostromir Gospels) is by no means free from Russian-style clerical errors, and these together with what we shall find in late 11th-century and in 12th-century MSS. constitute a substantial body of evidence for phonological discrimination between Old Bulgarian and Old Russian.

Let us consider here the principal kinds of clerical errors to be found in Old Russian religious monuments of the 11th and 12th centuries, viz. the Ostromir Gospels (1056-57), the two Svjatoslav Miscellanies (1073 and 1076), the Archangel and the Turov Gospels (11th c.), the Liturgical Menaea (1095-97), the Thirteen Homilies of St. Gregory of Nazianzus (11th c.), the Čudov Psalter (11th c.), the Mstislav, the Jur'jev (St. George), the Dobrilo, and the Halyč Gospels (all of the 12th c.), and the specifically Russian 12th-century

<sup>18</sup> See V. Thomsen, *The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia and the Origin of the Russian State* (Oxford-London, 1877).

*gramoty* and inscriptions. As early as the middle of the 11th century there is enough evidence to show that the two *jusy*, which have been thought since A.Ch. Vostokov (Osteneck) to represent nasal vowels in Old Bulgarian, were interpreted as oral vowels in Old Russian: thus we have *u/ju* for O.B. *ǫ/jǫ* and *a/ja* for O.B. *ę/ję* and *vice versa* in the Ostromir Gospels (e.g. глаголю "I speak" for глаголюж; родиша сѧ "they were born" for родишѧ сѧ; иижеомъ "to the Jews" for ииудеомъ, and всѧ "all things" for вся), and instances of this confusion multiply in the course of the next hundred and fifty years. It will be recalled that the evidence for the existence of nasal vowels in 10th-century Russian, as illustrated by proper names in Constantine and in contemporary Arab authors, is haphazard and unconvincing, but we may assume from the cogent testimony of the next century that the tendency to denasalise had already developed.

The other characteristic differences between Old Russian and its Old Bulgarian model in the use of vowel symbols turn on the values of the *jery* (ъ and ѣ), of *e* and *ě*, and the sporadic emergence of pleophony; and the consonantal systems of the two languages show a parallelism between O.B. *št/žd* and O.R. *č/ž*, to which we may add, as characterising the latter, such dialectal features as the North-West Russian *c*-articulation or *cokan'je* (e.g. Jur'jev Gospels кличюще "calling" for кличѣюще), and Galician *žč* for O.B. *žd* (e.g. Halyč Gospels 1144 дѣжчѣ "rain" for дѣждѣ). The 11th-century MSS. illustrate the substitution of Russian-style *tʹvrt/tʹvlt* for Old Bulgarian *tr̥t/tl̥t* (e.g. Ostr. Gospels испълнь "full" for исплнь) and *·tʹvrt/tʹvlt* for Old Bulgarian *tr̥t/tl̥t* (e.g. църкы "church" for цръкы), and we find even compromise forms of the "pleophonic" type *tʹvrt/tʹvlt* and *tʹvrt/tʹvlt* (e.g. скърѣбъ "grief" for скръбъ, and зърно "grain" for зръно). In stressed position it would seem that the *jery* represented, as in Old Bulgarian, vowels of close, but lowered type, like English [ɪ] and [ʊ] in "sit" and "put" respectively. When unstressed, however, as in final position, they had been apparently reduced to signs of palatalisation (ь) and non-palatalisation (ѣ). This is the inference to be drawn from increasingly frequent examples of syncope, represented by omission of characters (e.g. Archangel Gospels никто "none" for никѣто; Halyč Gospels ѿт "from" for отъ; Princess Jevfrosinija's Cross c. 1161 из "out of" for изъ). Examples like Νεσσητ in Constantine imply that the lapse of final *jery* was known in the 10th century.

The value of Old Russian *e* may be devined from such spellings as юго "his", оу нѣго "he has", понѣже "because", and тунѣ "gratis" in the Ostromir Gospels, which suggest that, as in

modern Russian, it was preceded by a palatal or palatalised consonant. We observe, however, that the illustrations here are limited to two types, viz. with *e* after *j* and *n*, and the use of the neuma (ˆ) over *n* (e.g. Ostr. Gospels о ѱемѣ "concerning him"), as often in Old Bulgarian, appears to show that [ɲ] existed in the language and that the iotised or ligatured *e* (ѣ) may have been a sporadic variant device for the neuma. A recent investigator<sup>19</sup> is inclined, unlike Vondrák,<sup>20</sup> to regard Old Russian *e* as "hard" and the Old Russian vowel-system as lacking the parallelism of "hard" and "soft" consonants, which is an outstanding feature of Literary Russian to-day.

The letter *jať* (ѣ) presents considerable difficulty. Its Old Bulgarian value, as I have tried to show elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> was normally that of [æ] in the Standard English pronunciation of "man", but in Old Russian there are many instances of the confusion of ѣ (ǣ) and я (*ja*), as in Old Bulgarian, and in addition to these a notable number of others which imply the phonetic parity of ǣ and *e*. In the modern language, as written before 1917, ǣ and *e* were synonymous phonetically, i.e. they were both pronounced (ɛ) except between palatalised sounds, and in North Russian dialects, as well as in Ukrainian, words with original ǣ have *i*. Even to-day certain North Russian dialects consistently distinguish between the pronunciation of historical ǣ and *e*, giving the former the closer and the latter the more open articulation (e/ɛ). *A posteriori* we are inclined to interpret ǣ as *e*, at least in those monuments which were copied in the North Russian dialect-area, for instance in Novgorod, Pskov, Polotsk, and Dvinsk, and this point of view receives contemporary sanction from the confusion of ǣ and *e*, especially in non-ecclesiastical writing (e.g. Prince Vladimir Davidovič's Goblet с. 1151 из нее "out of it" for изъ неѣ; Princess Jevfrosinija's Cross 1161 камѣньє "stones" for каменье). The interchange of ǣ and *e* is confined to North Russian; the one-sided substitution of *e* for ǣ occurs in South Russian. This is further proof, if such were needed, of the existence of dialectal differentiation in Old Russian.

We have already learnt that, besides the confusion of ǣ and *e*, Old Russian, like Old Bulgarian, illustrates the interchange of ǣ and *ja*. As early as the middle of the 11th century we find in the

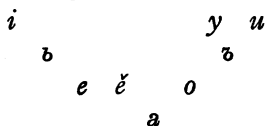
<sup>19</sup> B. Calleman, *Zu den Haupttendenzen der urslavischen und altrussischen Lautentwicklung* (Uppsala, 1950). See my review of this in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXIX, 72, London, 1950.

<sup>20</sup> *Čirkeňšlovanská chrestomatie* (Brno, 1925).

<sup>21</sup> "The Phonetic Value of *Jať* in Old Russian" (*Ramoušev Zbornik, Slavistična Revija*, III, Ljubljana, 1950).

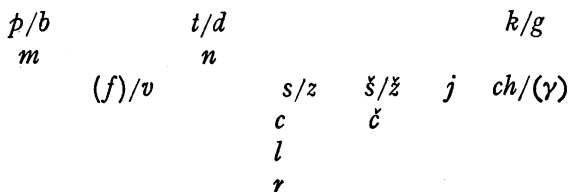
Ostromir Gospels such Russian features as идѣаше "he was going" for идѣаше and бѣаху "they were" for бѣахъ. This might suggest that ѣ represented the more open pronunciation [æ] it had in Old Bulgarian, but the quoted examples as well as others show that in each case the following syllable contains open *a*, which may have assimilated ѣ to itself. The completeness of the assimilation is shown in the Ostromir Gospels by such contracted forms as идѣаше or бѣаше "he was" for бѣаше. These, incidentally, also imply an intolerance of long vowels in Old Russian.

The Old Russian vowel-system may be represented by the following triangular grouping:—



which differs from the corresponding Old Bulgarian figure only in the relative placing of *e* and *ě*, phonetically [e] and [æ], in the latter.

The Old Russian consonant-system, based on an examination of the phonemes symbolised in 11th and 12th-century MSS., appears as follows:—



## V

In the series of historical records which enable us to gain an insight into Old Russian phonology, Constantine's *De administrando imperio* (949) and the 11th and 12th-century Russian recensions of Old Bulgarian MSS. are followed by the native record of the Primary Chronicle (*Pověst' vremennych lět*), whose earliest Slavonic matter relates to the founding of Varangian states in Eastern Europe. The names of Hrǫrikr (Rjurik) and his retinue as well as of his descendants (Rjurikoviči) are transliterated into Old Russian, and we also have Russian versions of the names of tribes and peoples on the periphery of 9th-century Rus' and a quantity of loan-words of motley extraction. Here a knowledge of the phonetics, necessarily hypothetical, of the various languages from which the Old Russian word-material derives will shed some light on Old

Russian phonology. This may now be presented in tabular form in terms of the Cyrillic alphabet. The vowel-system will appear as :—

	front	back
close	и	ы у(ю)
	ь	ъ
medium	е (ѣ), ѣ	
open		а(я)

and the consonantal system as :—

		bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar
occlusive	{ plosive	п/б		т/д			к/г
group	{ nasal	м		н			
	{ fricative		ф/в		с/з ш/ж й		х
constrictive	{ affricate				ц ч		
group	{ lateral				л		
	{ vibrant				р		

Investigation of the long list of Scandinavian names in the Primary Chronicle and of the Scandinavian loan-words in Old Russian <sup>22</sup> discloses among other things the following correspondences in vowels : и : i, í, y, ý (e.g. гридь “man-at-arms” < O.N. grīði ; Гримъ < O.N. Grímr ; Стирь < O.N. Styrr ; Диръ < O.N. Dýri), ы : i (e.g. шыгла “mast” < O.N. sigla), е : e (e.g. кербъ “bundle” < O.Norw. kerfi ; Емигъ < O.Sw. Hæmingr), ѣ : ei (e.g. Улѣбъ < O.N. Óleifr), а : a/á (e.g. Алданъ < O.N. Halfdanr ; Асмудъ < O.N. Ásmundr), о : o/a (e.g. Рогъволодъ < O.N. Rōg(n)valdr ; Иворъ < O.N. Ívarr), ъ : zero (e.g. Акунъ < O.Sw. Hákun), у : u/ú/ó (e.g. Гунаръ < O.N. Gunnarr ; Бруны < O.N. Brúni ; Руаръ < O.N. Hróarr), ю : ó (e.g. Рюрикъ < O.Sw. Hrōrikr), and ы : i (e.g. Туки < O.N. Tóki). There were no nasal vowels in 10th-century Old Russian, but some of the Scandinavian material reflects an earlier state of the language, which included them (e.g. пудъ “pood” < O.Sw. pund ; Судъ “the Golden Horn” < O.N. sund ; якоръ “anchor” < O.N. ankari ; стягъ “flag” < O.Sw. stang). The resemblance of ы and и in articulation, as suggested by the Russian transcriptions of Scandinavian names, is confirmed by the origin of both the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic character for ы, which is a digraph compounded of the symbol for

<sup>22</sup> See Thomsen, *op. cit.*, also St. Mladenov, *Starite germanski elementi v slavjanskite ezici* (Sofia, 1909), L. Niederle, *Slovanské starožitnosti* (Prague, 1901-26), V. Kiparsky, *Die gemeinslavischen Lehnwörter aus dem Germanischen* (Helsinki, 1934), Clara Thörnquist, *Studien über die nordischen Lehnwörter im Russischen* (Uppsala-Stockholm, 1948).

*jer* and one of the symbols for *i*. In all probability the two sounds were distinct from each other phonetically and, unless the "hard-soft" dichotomy of consonants had not yet been constituted, formed part of the same phoneme, as in the modern language. The correspondence  $\mathfrak{h}$ : *ei* is consistent and appears to illustrate a close pronunciation of the Russian symbol, which would make it different from the corresponding "lowered" Old Bulgarian pronunciation of it.<sup>23</sup> E. Sievers,<sup>24</sup> using melodic criteria, associated Old Bulgarian  $\mathfrak{h}$  with a falling tone ('), which tends to "open" vowel sounds. The parallelism of Old Russian *o* and Scandinavian *a* seems to imply that the former was an open vowel, perhaps like the [ɔ] of certain modern forms of Literary Russian. Old Russian *y* is used to represent the long close Scandinavian *ó* (œ), but this transcription was inevitable in view of the strong labialisation of the sound (cf. its modern Swedish equivalent). Both *y* and *a* in Old Russian stand, as we have seen, for long as well as short vowels in Scandinavian (Old Norse), and this proves that Old Russian did not distinguish vowel length any more than does the modern language. Nor did Old Russian distinguish length in consonants (cf. Гомолъ with O.N. Gamall, Гунаръ with Gunnarr, Маны with Manni). But otherwise the parallels between Old Russian and Scandinavian consonants are generally consistent. This means, for instance, that Scandinavian *p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *k*, *g*, *m*, *n*, *f*, *v*, *s*, *l*, and *r* are transcribed by the corresponding Old Russian sounds, *p* is normally given as  $\phi$ ,  $\partial$  as *д*, and *h* is ignored. When Scandinavian *f*, however, is pronounced [β], its Old Russian equivalent is  $\mathfrak{b}$  (e.g. Ульбъ < O.N. Ulfr). Our illustration here, with *лъ* for [l], suggests that Old Russian *л* must have been velarised, as in modern Russian, and that the Scandinavian *l* was heard as a "clear" sound, which therefore required to be transcribed with the help of *ь* as the sign of palatalisation. Difficulty of pronunciation was sometimes overcome by syncope of some member of the difficult sound-group: thus Malmfríðr appears in its Old Russian version as Малѣфридъ and Sigfríðr as Шибридъ. The character *ш* for Scandinavian *s* before *i* (cf. Шихбернъ or Шигобернъ for Sigbjörn, шыгла for sigla) is a curious correspondence which can scarcely represent a marked acoustic difference between Scandinavian *s* in this position and Scandinavian *s* in other positions (cf., say, Шибридъ with Слуды < O.N. Slóði).

The Old Russian versions of the names of peripheral tribes take us primarily into the domains of Finnic and Baltic. The Finnic

<sup>23</sup> See fn. 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Altslawisch ē und ja. Eine sprachgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig, 1925).



names comprise Вѣсь or Вєсь (cf. Finn. Vepsä), Корѣла (cf. Finn. Karjala), Либѣ (cf. Latv. Lībieši), Мѣрдва or Мордва, Пѣрмь or Пермь, Ъмь or Ямь (cf. Finn. Häme), and the Baltic—Зимѣгола (cf. Latv. Zemgale), Курѣь or Курєь (cf. Latv. Kurši), Литѣва (cf. Lith. Lietuva), Лѣтьгола (cf. Latv. dial. Latgola). To these we may add the river names Свѣрь or Свирь (cf. Finn. Syväri) and Нѣманъ (cf. Lith. Nemunas). It will be observed that ъ/е, ѣ/я, ѳ/о, and ѳ/и are in a number of cases synonymous phonetically, but all these variants, except ѣ/я, are known to represent historical developments inside Russian, and they occur in copies of Old Russian MSS. which are of later date than the language under review here. The various recensions of the composite Old Russian Chronicle belong to the latter part of the 14th century and later. By collating our Old Russian borrowings with the modern forms of their originals (there are no old forms on record) we may, however, arrive at some idea of the pronunciation of Old Russian ѣ, ъ, ѳ, and о. We see that ѣ corresponds to Finnic *ä/ja*, which gives it the open value of English [æ]. The correlations ъ/е and ѳ/о suggest a lowered pronunciation of the first term of each pair and places the two semivowels ъ and ѳ phonetically between *i—e* and *u—o* respectively. In final position, however, these semivowels appear to have been asyllabic, as the contrast of ъ/и and ѳ/ы implies (cf. Либѣ with Гѣти and Сѣверѣ with Дулѣбы). The value of о, which transcribes both the foreign *u* and the foreign *o* sound (cf. Курєь with Latv. Kurši, Лѣтьгола with Latv. dial. Latgola) must have varied considerably as, indeed, it does in modern Russian. At this point we may avail ourselves of the very scanty material on Old Russian pronunciation provided by the mediaeval Latin transcriptions of Russian names found in the 12th-century *Chronicon Livoniae* of Henricus Lettus.<sup>25</sup> Here we find Ploceke for Полотьскѣ, Vetseke (Vesceke) for Вячко, Plescekowe for Пльсковѣ (> Псков), Smalenceke for Смольньскѣ, Nogardia for Новѣгородѣ, Susdalia for Суздаль, and Wissewaldus for Всеволодѣ. The correlation ъ/е is illustrated several times, and the anomalous ѳ/е appears in final unstressed syllables, but looks conventional and can hardly be taken seriously as representing a truly phonetic equation. The *a*-articulation (*akan'je*), characteristic of White Russian, appears in Smalenceke, if this is not merely a scribal error, [æ] as the pronunciation of interpalatal *a* is suggested by Vetseke, and the bilabial value of в seems to emerge from the "syncopated" form Nogardia.

<sup>25</sup> See fn. 4.

## VI

Russian loans, representing various stages in the history of the language, occur in West Finnic (Finnish, Carelian, Vepsian, Vodian, Estonian, and Livonian) and in Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian), and these are considered to shed light on Old Russian pronunciation, though it should be repeated here that the West Finnic and Baltic forms are modern and in the best of cases cannot be traced back beyond the 16th century. Nevertheless the relatively conservative vowel-systems of these language-groups stand out in acute contrast to the much altered modern Russian system (see sect. VIII) and by virtue of this conservatism are probably nearer to Old Russian and even to the much more hypothetical prehistoric system of the Common Slavonic protoglossa. Indeed the evidence of modern Lithuanian and Latvian and the less reliable evidence of the extinct Old Prussian have been used to give phonetic reality to the Old Bulgarian *jery*, and the first two, as modern Baltic, may be placed under tribute for a definition of those sounds in Old Russian. Equally useful for this and the wider purpose of plotting the points of the Old Russian vowel-system is the information supplied by Old Russian loan-words in West Finnic. But West Finnic, especially in its more conservative literary forms, Finnish and Estonian, has also been used to penetrate into periods in the history of Russian which lie beyond the 11th century. Forms such as Estonian *sundima* "to compel" and Finnish *suntio* "verger" (cf. O.B. сѣдѣя) and Estonian *und* and Livonian *ũnda* "angle, fishing hook" (cf. O.B. ѡда) show the existence of nasal vowels in Russian at the time of borrowing.<sup>26</sup> As such vowels are difficult to postulate for the 10th century, the loan-words containing them are assumed to have been taken over very much earlier, possibly in the 7th. Other Russian loan-words in West Finnic throw light on the phonetic value of the *jery*. Thus Finn. *lusikka*, Est. *lusikas* "spoon", derived from O.R. лѣжка, interpret both in a single word as *u* (ѡ) and *i* (ѣ), and this interpretation is confirmed by a number of other examples (e.g. Finn. *tuska*, Est. *tusk* "grief" < O.R. тѣска and Finn. *risti*, Est. *rist* < O.R. кръсть). The difficult character ѣ is variously glossed: it appears as *ää* (æ) in Finnish *läätti* (*lätti*) "sty" from Old Russian клѣтъ, *lääva* "byre" from Old Russian хлѣвъ, and *määra* "measure" from Old Russian мѣра, and as *eä* in Carelian *reähka* "sin" from Old Russian грѣхъ. Such words are thought to be earlier than, say, Carelian *miela* "chalk" (< O.R. мѣлъ) and Vodian

<sup>26</sup> J. J. Mikkola, *Die ältesten Berührungen zwischen Ostseefinnisch und Russisch* (Helsinki, 1938).

*věsti* (< O.R. вѣсть). The open value of *jať* is confirmed also by such West Finnic place-names in Old Russian as Корѣла (< Karjala) and Турѣ (< Turja) and more precisely by several Old Russian loan-words in Latvian, e.g. *klēts* "granary", *klēva* (*klevs*), *mērs*, and *grēks*, which derive from Old Russian клѣтъ, хлѣвъ, мѣра, and грѣхъ respectively, and in all of which *ě* is pronounced "broadly" (Latv. *plati*). This pronunciation, however, might be a later development, illustrating an incipient vowel-harmony (cf. Latv. *tēvs* "father", pronounced [tæ:s] and going back to a reconstructed *\*tēvas*, with which we may compare Lithuanian *tēvas*, where *ė* is [e:]). Some of the Finnish examples we have adduced as well as other West Finnic ones, like Finnish *siisti* "clean" (< O.R. чистыи), Estonian *saan* "sledge" (< O.R. сани), Carelian *miero* "peace" (< O.R. миръ, cf. Lith. *miėras*, Latv. *miers*), and Vodian *kōmina* "threshing-floor" (< O.R. гумьно), show that the ear of West Finnic speakers, which is very sensitive to variations in vowel-length, distinguished the small differences in duration between stressed and unstressed vowels, which the Russian, then as now, ignores in his spelling.

The testimony of Baltic, unlike that of West Finnic, reveals even older "strata" or "periods" of Russian (East Slavonic), which confront us with the characteristics of the hypothetical Common Slavonic. We have already referred to the *jery*. The equivalences ъ/*u* and ь/*i* are pointed by a considerable variety of examples, including Lithuanian *blusa*, Latvian *blusa* "flea" (cf. O.R. блѣха), Lithuanian *trušis* "reed" (cf. O.R. трѣсть), Lithuanian *rugiai*, Latvian *rudzi* "rye" (cf. O.R. рѣжь), Lithuanian *linai*, Latvian *lini* "flax" (cf. O.R. льнѣ), Lithuanian *pirštas*, Latvian *pirksts* "finger" (cf. O.R. пѣрътъ), Lithuanian *širdis*, Latvian *sirds* "heart" (cf. O.R. сѣръдце), and Lithuanian *viršus* "top" (cf. O.R. вѣрхъ).<sup>27</sup> The value of Old Russian stressed ъ and ь as short *u* and *i* respectively has already been confirmed from other sources, but by the 10th century the unstressed *jery* could no longer be interpreted in this way. In contrast to the clear-cut definition of these vowels, Baltic offers a choice of "glosses" for Old Russian *jať*, viz. *ai*, *ei*, *ie*, and *ė* in Lithuanian and *ai*, *ie*, and *ē* (æ) in Latvian. The relevant parallels here are Old Russian цѣна and Lithuanian *kainà* "price" (Latvian *cena* is a late loan from Russian), Old Russian сѣмья (also семья) and Lithuanian *šeimyna*, Latvian *saimē* "family", Old Russian снѣгъ and Lithuanian *sniėgas*, Latvian *sniegs* "snow", Old Russian звѣрь and Lithuanian *žvėris* "beast" (Latvian has *zvērs* pronounced **zvæ:rs**). In all these cases, it will be remarked, Old Russian *jať*

<sup>27</sup> See R. Trautmann, *Baltisch-slavisches Wörterbuch* (Göttingen, 1923).

is stressed, which facilitates comparison and gives relief to the Lithuanian and Latvian equivalents. The baffling variety of these does not permit selection of a typical one, and the only inference we can draw from them is that the Old Russian phoneme was interpreted as either a diphthong or a long vowel, i.e. duration enters into its structure. The only other Old Russian "problem-vowel", on which it is possible to seek enlightenment from Baltic is *ы*, and here we may compare Old Russian *сынъ* with Lithuanian *sūnūs* "son" and Old Russian *дымъ* with Lithuanian *dūmai*, Latvian *dūmi* "smoke". The parallelism of *ы/ū* is supported by other Indo-European examples (cf. for the second of our parallels Sanskrit *dhūmah*, Old Greek *θυμός*, Latin *fūmus*), but their evidence cannot serve any more than that of Lithuanian to define the phonetic character of Old Russian *ы*, whose unrounded quality has already been confirmed by the mere presence of the composite symbol in the Cyrillic ductus side by side with the symbols for *у* (*y*) and *и* (*i*) and by the fact that the three symbols are never confused in Old Russian usage.

## VII

Primed with the evidence of the foregoing sections, we can now profitably examine the Old Russian phonological schemes, whether partial or complete, which Russian scholarship has advanced since the general acceptance of Neogrammarian doctrine in Russia in the eighteen-seventies. This doctrine influenced the later thought of F. Buslajev, but his work in both character and tenor belongs to an earlier and less accurate period in Russian linguistics, and we may therefore begin here with the views of A. I. Sobolevskij and follow them up with those of A. A. Šachmatov, N. N. Durnovo, G. A. Vinokur, and L. A. Bulachovskij, in that order.

To Sobolevskij,<sup>28</sup> as to the rest, except Bulachovskij, the term "Old Russian" covers all varieties of East Slavonic used prior to the 14th century, when the extant tripartition of the East Slavonic language-type is supposed to have arisen. We have to do at this point with the prerevolutionary view, which had the potency of an axiom, that the two forms of East Slavonic, White Russian and Ukrainian, the latter known as "Little Russian", were merely dialects of the same language. This view has now been discarded, and the continued study of White Russian and Ukrainian seems likely to justify the tripartition perhaps not merely as a relatively modern phenomenon but, with advance in the study of historical

<sup>28</sup> *Lekcii po istorii russkogo jazyka*<sup>4</sup> (St. Petersburg, 1907).

phonetics, also as an early historical fact. Sobolevskij's standpoint is diachronic: he concentrates on phonetic changes and nowhere attempts to give a synchronic scheme of Old Russian pronunciation. On the testimony of Constantine's  $\text{Нѣсошѣт}$  he assumes that the 11th-century *jery* or "surds" (*gluchiye*), as he calls them, had lapsed in unstressed position and that this led, as one result, to the creation of syllabic "liquids" (e.g. Пльсковъ "Pskov" and кръстити "to baptise" in the Laurentian MS. of the Primary Chronicle, 1377). But this phenomenon belongs to the 14th century, to which Sobolevskij also relegates the *a*-articulation (*akan'je*) and its corollaries. Changes, however, such as that of *e* into *o* before "hard" consonants (e.g. блажонъ "blessed" for блаженъ in Ippolit's Homily on Antichrist, 12th c.) and the palatalisation of velars (e.g. паки "again" for пацын St John Damascene's Theology, 12th c.) are attested at the turn of the 12th century, and the latter is found even at the close of the 11th (e.g. фуники "palms" for фуники in the Svjatoslav Miscellany of 1073). This historical phenomenon is particularly interesting as it raises the question of the existence of a parallel series of palatalised or "soft" consonants in the earliest recorded period of Old Russian. As Sobolevskij is not a phonetician, but an historian, the question does not receive a final answer.

For an answer to it we must turn to Šachmatov,<sup>29</sup> who, as a student of Sweet and Sievers, was interested in the phonetics as well as the history of his mother tongue. But Šachmatov is over-elaborate: not satisfied with identifying the phonemes of Old Russian (Old East Slavonic) he must also specify their variants. Thus, besides the plain vowels

<i>i</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>ь</i>		<i>ѹ</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>o</i>	
<i>a</i>		

he gives us close *ê* and *ô*, an *ä* (*æ*), the labialised front vowels *ѣ* (*ɛ̟*), *ѥ* (*ø*), and *Ѧ* (*œ*), and the centralised set *ѣ̃*, *ѥ̃*, and *Ѧ̃*, to which, incidentally, he adds *jer* (*ɤ*) as a "labialised" (rounded) vowel. Like *ɤ*, *ы* is regarded as a central vowel, and *jať* is given two positional values, viz. *eä* and *ie*. The Old Russian consonant-system is conceived mainly as "hard", viz. *p/b*, *t/d*, *k/g*, *m*, *n*, *f/v*, *s/z*, *ch/ġ*, *h*, *l*, *r*. The more limited "soft" series, according to

<sup>29</sup> "Очерк древнейшего периода истории русского языка" (*Enciklopedija Slavjanskoj Filologii*, II, 1, Petrograd, 1915; also *Vvedeniye v kurs istorii russkogo jazyka*, I, Petrograd, 1916).

Šachmatov, is represented by  $k'/g'$ ,  $š'/ž'$ ,  $j$ ,  $c'/dz'$ ,  $č'/dž'$ ,  $v'$ . The presence of the sounds  $h$  and  $dž'$  shows that Šachmatov has cast his net beyond the limits of the strictly Russian—he would say “Great Russian”—system. In addition to these details, arrived at, so far as the vowels are concerned, mostly by abstract, *a posteriori* reasoning, Šachmatov declares that Old Russian also distinguished quantity and tone.

How far such elaboration can go may be seen from A. D. Grigor'jev's<sup>30</sup> phonetic scheme for Old Russian. Grigor'jev, who appears to have been influenced by Šachmatov, if not directly by Sweet, recognises “strong” and “tense” vowels, applying the first term to varieties of the two *jery* and the second to all vowels, including these. To indicate “tenseness” he uses the circumflex sign, e.g.  $\hat{o}$ ,  $\hat{i}$ . “Tenseness” and “strength” are distinct, because the former can be a quality not only of “strong”, but of “weak” vowels. Grigor'jev illustrates these qualities and “labialisation” by distinguishing a considerable variety of *jery*, viz. labialised strong  $\mathfrak{r}$ , labialised tense strong  $\hat{\mathfrak{r}}$ , labialised weak  $\mathfrak{r}$ , and labialised tense weak  $\hat{\mathfrak{r}}$ . The two pairs are distinguished as “back-mid” and “mid” respectively. The mid-series also contains non-labialised weak  $\mathfrak{r}$  and tense weak  $\hat{\mathfrak{r}}$ , and the remaining three vowels of this type are placed in the front group, viz. non-labialised strong  $\mathfrak{r}$ , non-labialised tense strong  $\hat{\mathfrak{r}}$ , and labialised strong  $\mathfrak{r}$ . Besides all these fine shades of the *jery* we have a superabundance of diphthongs, into which the *jery* are presumed to enter (e.g.  $ib$ ,  $ua$ ). The consonantal system is presented to us as less complex in accordance with the same *a posteriori* reasoning, based on an at least partly theoretical phonetic analysis of modern Literary Russian in terms of the Sweet-Sievers classification. Grigor'jev thinks that the language of the 11th century and of the first half of the 12th had both “hard” and “soft” consonants. All those in Šachmatov's two series reappear, and in addition to them we have the following:  $p'/b'$ ,  $t'/d'$ ,  $m'$ ,  $n'$ ,  $v'$ ,  $s'/z'$ , and  $r'$ , whose presence gives a preponderantly palatalised articulation to mediaeval Russian. Drawing on White Russian and Ukrainian as well as on certain varieties of South Russian for support, Grigor'jev postulates even a bilabial pair  $w/w'$  as alternative to the labio-dental  $v/v'$ .

When we consult postrevolutionary works on the history of Russian, viz. Durnovo's,<sup>31</sup> Vinokur's,<sup>32</sup> and Bulachovskij's,<sup>33</sup> we

<sup>30</sup> *Russkij jazyk* (Warsaw, 1915).

<sup>31</sup> *Očerki istorii russkogo jazyka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1924).

<sup>32</sup> *Russkij jazyk. Istoričeskij očerk* (Moscow, 1945).

<sup>33</sup> *Istoričeskij kommentarij k literaturnomu russkomu jazyku*<sup>3</sup> (Kiev, 1950).

discover a characteristic and inevitable concentration of attention on the history of the language: the accounts of the phonological system of Old Russian are completely subordinated to the accumulation of data to illustrate its development. We find in all three authors a more or less detailed description of the various phonemes, but no attempt to systematise and tabulate them. The approach and method are Sobolevskij's. The Neogrammarian Durnovo, for instance, is interested in "the history of the sounds" and traces them from Common Slavonic. Here, like Šachmatov, he gives us the hypothetical system of Common Slavonic phonemes, and it becomes obvious that the very detailed Old Russian phonetic systems of Šachmatov and Grigor'jev owe a great deal of their character to this linking-up with Common Slavonic as well as to an awareness of the phonological pattern of the modern literary language. Of the more puzzling sounds, ы is described in terms of its modern equivalent, ѣ as a diphthong *ie*,<sup>34</sup> descended from Common Slavonic, where it is supposed to have had the same value, and the "reduced" ъ and ѣ as difficult to define, but possibly [ə] and [ɪ] respectively.

Bulachovskij (*op. cit.*) has much less to tell us about the Old Russian phonological system than Durnovo and he confines himself, in the section entitled "Phonetics" (pp. 50-85), mainly to a selection of historically presented material. The "reduced" ъ is not defined, but examples like *възбѣ* "in the room" for *въ избѣ* and *сынымъ* "with another" for *съ инымъ* in Sil'vestr's "Household Book" (*Domostroj*, 16th c.), though very late, hint at the possibility that it may have been pronounced [ə]. This is also supported by the "tense reduced" ъ (spelt о/ы) in the unstressed ending of the Modern Russian masculine adjective *новой* (Lit. R. *новый*) "new", which in the Moscow-type pronunciation appears as [novəj]. In connection with the value of *jal'* Bulachovskij quotes literary tradition, as represented by "the facts in monuments and by the testimony of grammarians",<sup>35</sup> to the effect that, whether stressed or unstressed, it was pronounced "ie and not e" in the Moscow area till the 15th century. Vinokur (*op. cit.*) confirms the pronunciation of *jal'* as *ie*, but he offers close *e* as an alternative, and as for ъ, he ascribes to this character the value of [ə].

<sup>34</sup> This derives from the evidence of the modern Serbian *je*-subdialect of the *što*-dialect.

<sup>35</sup> See V. V. Vinogradov, "Issledovanija iz oblasti fonetiki severno-russkogo narečija" (*Izvestija Otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, XXIV, Petrograd, 1919).



## VIII

Russian scholarship then has so far not arrived at a uniform reconstruction of the Old Russian (Old East Slavonic) phonological system, and up to now no attempt has been made to approach it from the vantage-point of the empirically and systematically analysed Literary Russian and Literary Ukrainian systems. Šachmatov's interpretation, as we have seen, uses the Sweet-Sievers analysis of sounds, i.e. his approach is phonetic and not phonological. A purely phonetic, as distinct from a phonological investigation of Old Russian, though feasible, is altogether too conjectural. The phonological approach ties up directly with the relative simplicity of the traditional Russian alphabet, and its emphasis on essentials and broad distinctions rather than on refinements makes it more suitable than the phonetic for the study of the early stages of a language, which can obviously offer nothing but written records.

The phonological systems of present-day Literary Russian and Literary Ukrainian represent, synchronically, the "terminus" which the language-form we are studying has reached. They therefore must necessarily contain some part of that older phonetic system, and an examination of them in relation to the historical evidence we have been sifting and to the conclusions of Russian scholarship should enable us to trace the main outlines of that system.

The vowel-phonemes of Literary Russian<sup>36</sup> and Literary Ukrainian<sup>37</sup> may first be compared, the former represented on the left, the latter on the right.



Comparison of these vowel-triangles shows that the two systems are closely similar and differ in general only in the function of y, which is usually regarded as constituting a single phoneme with i in

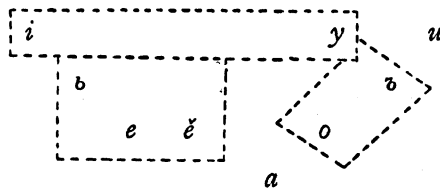
<sup>36</sup> See R. Košutić, *Gramatika ruskog jezika*, I, 2 (Petrograd, 1919); M. V. Trofimov and D. Jones, *The Pronunciation of Russian* (Cambridge, 1923); S. K. Boyanus, *Manual of Russian Pronunciation*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1944); R. I. Avanesov i V. N. Sidorov, *Očerki grammatiki russkogo literaturnogo jazyka* (Moscow, 1945); G. O. Vinokur, *Russkoje sceničeskoje proiznošenje* (Moscow, 1948); A. N. Gvozjdov, *O fonologičeskich sredstvach russkogo jazyka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1949); R. I. Avanesov, *Russkoje literaturnoje proiznošenje* (Moscow, 1950).

<sup>37</sup> O. Synjavskij, "Sproba zvukovoji charakterystyky literaturnoji ukrajins'koji movy" (*Naukove Zapysky Charkivs'koji Nauk.-Doslidčoji Katedry Mo voznaustva*, II, X, Khar'kov, 1929); J. Zilyński, *Opis fonetyczny języka ukraińskiego* (Cracow, 1932); J. Serech, *Narys sučasnoji ukrajinskoji literaturnoji movy* (Munich, 1951).

Russian and as an independent, if anomalous phoneme, or *phonema errans*,<sup>38</sup> in Ukrainian. Phonetically also *y* differs markedly in the two languages, being an advanced back vowel in Russian and a central sound gravitating towards *e* in Ukrainian and therefore diverging from its advanced, but not lowered Polish counterpart.

Literary White Russian has a system of stressed vowels phonetically identical with that of Literary Russian, but their function recalls the Ukrainian system, for all the front vowels, except *i*, may be preceded by "hard" consonants as well as by "soft" ones. Yet White Russian lacks the "hardness" of Ukrainian articulation and phonologically appears to occupy an intermediate position between Russian and Ukrainian.<sup>39</sup>

If we now turn to the Old Russian vowel-system as expressed by the 11th and 12th-century Cyrillic characters, we shall note that the difference between this and its modern equivalent resides in the presence of *ѣ*, *ѡ*, and *ѣ* (*ѣ*), but examination of the phonologically relevant Old Russian symbols suggests that stressed *ѣ* and *ѡ* are used as variants of the *e* and *o* phonemes respectively (cf. O.R. *отѣцъ/отецъ* "father", O.R. *вѣлкѣ/волкѣ* "wolf"), and we have already had occasion to observe that *e* and *ѣ* are equipollent or synonymous in at least the monuments of North Russian origin. In view of this we might fairly reduce the Old Russian system of stressed vowel-phonemes to the Latin orthographic pentad.



From a purely phonetic and more discriminating standpoint and for practical purposes, however, it may be desirable to specify the reconstructed pronunciation of the vowels *ѡ*, *ѡ*, and *ѣ*. The first

<sup>38</sup> See J. Šerech, "Phonema Errans" (*Lingua*, II, 4, Haarlem, 1950).

<sup>39</sup> See E. F. Karskij, *Obzor zvukov i form belorusskoj reči* (Moscow, 1885), and *Belorusskaja reč'* (Petrograd, 1918); P. A. Rastorgujev, *Belorusskaja reč' v jejo sovremennom i prošlom sostojanii* (Moscow, 1918-1920); Ja. Ljosik, *Hramatyka belaruskaje movy. Fonetyka* (Minsk, 1926); T. P. Lamcjoŭ, *Belaruskaja hramatyka I* (Minsk, 1935).

offers no difficulty if we overlook the misleading epithets "very short" and "shorter than short", which are often applied to the *jery*, and we shall probably not be far wrong if we assume that it was sounded [ɹ]. The correlative back vowel ɜ is perhaps best interpreted as [ə]. And in order to distinguish ɛ̃ from e, the former may be taken to be either [æ̃] or [iẽ]. But such artificial distinction, we must bear in mind, is merely a function of expediency.

The consonantal systems of Literary Russian and Literary Ukrainian <sup>40</sup> differ considerably from each other, the former having two parallel and complementary series of phonemes, "hard" and "soft", and the latter only a limited number of "soft" or palatalised consonants. The Literary (especially Leningrad) Russian parallelism of "hard" and "soft" is disturbed in the main by the existence of the normally "hard" fricatives ʃ and ʒ and the exclusively "hard" affricate ʧ as well as the exclusively "soft" affricate ʧ̣, neither of which has a voiced correlate, except as a positional variant. But these are minor "flaws" in a system whose balance becomes abundantly clear by comparison with those of the other two East Slavonic languages. Ukrainian, for instance, palatalises only its dentals, both simple and affricative, viz. *t/d*, *s/z*, *c/dz*, *n*, and its "liquids" (*l*, *r*), and this gives a predominantly "hard" system contrasting sharply with the much "softer" Russian. The contrast is perceptibly emphasised by the presence of certain characteristic consonant-phonemes in Ukrainian, viz. voiced *h*, *c'/dz'*, *dz*, *dʒ*, and *ŋ*, the last being a variant of *n* before velars. White Russian <sup>41</sup> adheres to the Ukrainian system at some points (e.g. in having voiced *h*, *c'/dz'*, *dʒ*), but it also has its own characteristic phonemes (e.g. *w*, found dialectally in the other two languages, *ʒdʒ* as the voiced correlate of the complex ʃʧ̣, and a solitary *r*), and agrees with Russian in its parallelism of "hard" and "soft" consonants. Here again White Russian is, as it were, the link between Russian and Ukrainian. All three phonological systems are lineally descended from the 11th and 12th-century Old East Slavonic (we have called it "Old Russian" in our study), and their divergencies presuppose the existence of a similar parallelism nine centuries ago. Indeed, we have already observed that the Old Russian literary monuments frequently exhibit from the outset certain dialectal features which are more or less marked.

Summarising both the synchronic and the diachronic evidence,

<sup>40</sup> See authorities enumerated in footnotes 36 and 37.

<sup>41</sup> See Karskij, *op. cit. supra*.

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we are now in a position to postulate the Old Russian system of consonantal-phonemes as follows :—

					<i>k/g</i>
<i>p/b</i>		<i>t/d</i>			
<i>p'/b'</i>		<i>t'/d'</i>			
<i>m</i>		<i>n</i>			
<i>m'</i>		<i>n'</i>			
	<i>v</i>		<i>s/z</i>		
	<i>v'</i>		<i>s'/z'</i>		
			<i>š'/ž'</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>ch/ǵ</i>
			<i>c</i>		
			<i>c'</i>	<i>č'</i>	
			<i>l</i>		
			<i>l'</i>		
			<i>r</i>		
			<i>r'</i>		

It will be observed that, as in Literary Russian to-day, though not always at the same points, the parallelism of the “hard” and “soft” phonemes is incomplete. The velars, both plosive and fricative, are exclusively “hard”, and the hush-sibilants and all the affricates are exclusively “soft”. The sound *f* is absent from our table, occurring as it does only in foreign loan-words (e.g. the already quoted *фвникъ* “palm” from Greek *φοίνιξ* in the Svjatoslav Miscellany of 1073) and even in such being sometimes replaced by *p* (e.g. *парусъ* “sail” from Greek *φάρος*). Last of all, we have deliberately omitted the occasionally posited *w*, *dz'*, *dž'*, and *h* as variants of already existing phonemes.